

LXXXVIII.

## MEMOIRS

OF  
LITERATURE.

Monday, November 19. 1711.

AN HISTORICAL ACCOUNT,  
never before publish'd, of the Life and  
Trial of MICHAEL SERVETUS.

In several Letters to \* \* \* \*

Letter I.

S I R,

**I**N order to satisfy your Curiosity, I shall freely communicate to you all the Discoveries that I have made concerning the Famous Heretick, *Michael Servetus*, besides what I have inserted in the 246. Page of my *Memoirs of Literature*: And tho' it be a Subject that will afford Matter for several Reflexions, I shall hardly make any, being contented to relate Historical Facts, and leaving it to you to make your Observations upon them.

*MICHAEL SERVETUS* was born in the Year \* 1509. at *Villanueva* \* in *Aragon*. His Father, who was a Notary, sent him to the University of *Toulouse*, to study the Civil Law. *Servetus* began to read the Bible then, which he had never done before. It does not appear that there were any Antitrinitarians in *France*, or any where else, at that time; and therefore it is not improbable that he himself broached the new Doctrine, for which he was put to death afterwards. Perhaps he applied himself to read the Holy Scripture, because the Reformation made a great Noise in *France*; and being sensible that the Church wanted to be reform'd, 'tis not unlikely that he went so far, of his own Head, as to fancy that the Trinity was one of those Doctrines that were to be rejected. However it be, he grew very fond of his Opinions; and after he had been Two or Three Years at *Toulouse*, he resolved to retire into *Germany*; and to set up for a Reformer. He went to *Basil* by the way of *Lyons* and *Geneva*; and having had some

\* He said during his Trial, the 28th of *August* 1553. that he was then 44 Years of Age.

\* \* *Thuanus* and several other Authors say, He was born at *Tarragona*; which is a Mistake.

Conferences at *Basil* with *Oecolampadius*, he set out for *Strasbourg*, being extremely desirous to discourse with *Bucer* and *Capito*, Two Celebrated Reformers of that City. At his Departure from *Basil*, he left a Manuscript, which he had written against the Trinity, in the Hands of *Conrad Rous* a Bookseller, who sent it afterwards to *Hagenau*. *Servetus* went thither from *Strasbourg*, to get it printed, in the Year 1531. The Title of that Book, and a short Account of the Author's Doctrine, may be seen in the 246. Page of my *Memoirs*. That Piece was publish'd at *Strasbourg* and *Francfort* before the Month of *August*. When it was brought into *Switzerland*, several Protestant Divines were very much displeased with it, as it appears from a Letter of *Oecolampadius* to *Bucer*. "I saw this Week, says he \* our Friends of *Berne*, who make their Compliments to you and to *Capito*. They are very much offended with the Book entitled, *De Trinitatis Erroribus*, which some of them have seen. I desire you would acquaint *Luther*, that this Book was printed out of this Country, and without our Knowledge. For, (to mention but One Article,) it is an impudent thing to affirm, as the Author does, That the *Lutherans* do not understand the Doctrine of Justification. But that Man, whether he be a *Photinian*, or of any other Sect, thinks he knows more than every body else. Our Church will be very ill spoken of, unless our Divines make it their Business to cry him down. I beseech you in particular to keep a watchful Eye over it, and to make an Apology for our Church,

\* *Invisi hac hebdomada Bernates, qui te & Capitonem salutant plurimum. Libellus de Trinitatis Erroribus à quibusdam ex illis visus duntaxat, supremum offendit. Vellem te scribere Luthero, quod nobis inficiis liber alibi excusus sit. Impudentia enim erat adscribere Lutheranti, justificationis rationem eos ignorare; ut de reliquis taceam. Sed Photinianus ille, vel nescio cujus sectæ homo, solus sapere sibi videretur. Nisi ab Ecclesiæ nostræ doctoribus exploderetur, pessimè audiretur est. Tu præ aliis, oro, vigiles: Et si non alibi, certè in confutatione tua ad Imperatorem Ecclesiæ nostras excusa, utcumque hæc bestia irreperferit. Aburitur omnibus in suum sensum, tantum ne confiteatur Filium coeternum Patri & consubstantiali. Arque hic est, qui suscipit probandum hominem Christum esse Filium Dei. Oecolampadi & Zwinglii Epistola Lib. IV. Pag. 351. Basil. 1597. in Quarto.*







II. An Regnum Christi sit in hominibus; quando quis ingreditur, & quando regeneretur?

III. An Baptismus Christi debeat in fide fieri, sicut Coena; & quorsum haec instituta sint fovere novo?

Calvin answered those Queries; but Servetus, far from being satisfied with his Explications, writ to him a Second Letter, containing a Confutation of his Answer. Calvin being very much displeased with that Letter, made a sharp Reply to it, as he himself (a) owns. Whereupon Servetus, who was no less fiery than his Antagonist, grew very angry with him. Calvin says this Dispute occasioned the Hatred, which Servetus conceived for him; and complains (b) that that Heretick did not cease from that time to make Imprecations against him.

Servetus sent a Manuscript to Calvin, to have his Judgment concerning it; about six Years before he was apprehended at Geneva. That Piece was never printed: It was produced against him at his Trial, as I shall shew hereafter. Thus it appears that a long Correspondence between Calvin and Servetus, occasioned at last a mutual Hatred and Animosity, which proved very fatal to the latter. Calvin was so incensed against Servetus, that he could not forbear to revile him in his Commentaries upon the Bible. He calls him a profligate Fellow (un melchant Garnement) full of Pride, and a Dog, upon (c) the 1st Verse of the first Chapter of St. John's Gospel. He writ those Words before Servetus came to Geneva; for the Epistle Dedicatory is dated January 1. 1553.

Varillas (d) affirms, that there is at Paris an Original Letter of Calvin to Farel, written in 1546. which was never printed, and that these Words are to be found in it. "Servetus has lately writ to me, and sent me at the same time a large Book stuffed with idle Fancies, and full of Arrogance. He says I shall find in it admirable Things, and such as have been hitherto unheard of. He offersto come hither, if I like it: But I will not engage my Word; for if he comes, and if any Regard be had to my Authority, I shall not suffer him to escape without losing his Life". Sorbier (e) mentions the same Letter, and says that Grotius saw it at Paris, and that these Words are contained in it. *Audio Servetum huc venturum, ut mecum conferat. Ego, si quid apud Magistratus possum, faciam ut nunquam vivus abeat.* If I am not very much mistaken, I have read this Passage in a Book of Grotius. The Book, mentioned in the Words quoted by Varillas, is without doubt the Manuscript which Servetus sent to Calvin. The Date of the Letter, viz. 1546. does sufficiently prove it.

Servetus continued to be so fond of his new Opinions, that he resolved to publish a Third Book against the Trinity, and some other Doctrines. That Book, for which he was burnt at Geneva, came out at Vienne in Dauphine in the beginning of the Year 1553. with this Title, *Christianismi Restitutio*, &c. I must refer you again to the 246. Page of my Memoirs, where you will see the whole Title, and a general Account of that Book. Besides what I have said there, I shall observe that he printed a Thousand Copies; that most of them were burnt at Vienne with the Author's Effigies, and at Frankfort, which is the Reason why that Book is so scarce (f); that Servetus was neither an Arian nor a Photinian; that he asserted not only the Pre-existence of Christ, but also that Christ is not a Creature, nor a Being of a finite Power, but true God, and that he ought to be worshipp'd as such; that he expresses himself so confusedly, that 'tis no easy thing to have a Notion of his Doctrine; that he calls it a Mystery unknown to the World, but at the same time owns that those, who acknowledge Christ to be only the Messiah and the Son of God as he is a Man, may attain to Salvation.

(a) Ibid. pag. 827.

(b) Ibid. pag. 835.

(c) I make use of the Edition of the Year 1563.

(d) Histoire de l'Heretie ad. ann. 1553. pag. 350. 351, of the Paris Edition in 4to.

(e) Sorberiana, pag. 48, 49. of the Dutch Edition, 1694.

(f) There was a Copy of that Book in the Year 1613. in the Library of the Landgrave of Hesse-Cassel.

on; that he expresses upon all Occasions a great Indignation against the Church of Rome, and takes it to be the Beast mentioned in the Apocalypse. Perhaps, Sir, you will never see that Book; and therefore I shall insert some Passages out of it, as a Specimen of his Style, and of his Abhorrence for the Doctrines and Practices of the Church of Rome. Pag. 520. "Insigni fraude (says he) Papistis suggestit Diabolus illa pro mortuis suffragia, ut viventes homines negligent bene facere, &c." Pag. 504. "Annon vanitatis est divinatio, Daemonum figmentum, & Antichristi praeludens augurium, ex quibuldam fidei Petri testimoniis. Regnum Papatum inferre Theraphisticum scelus est ex detortis Scripturae locis idola & cucullas inducere, & traditiones varias tanto sacrilegio de Libro Dei suffurari. — In vanum colitur Deus a Papistis per Papae Doctrinas & mandata hominum, Matt. 15." Pag. 502. "Admiracione profecto & stupore nunc duceretur Petrus, si inimum hunc ludam videret a Micratis illis, Cucullatis, & Rasis cum vestimentis illis ita celebrari, universo populo tam insigniter idololatre. — Nulla in Babylonica illa Missa est Eucharistia, nulla communionis Coena, nulla Charitas, nulla corporis Christi participatio. Sed velut in Synagoga Sathanae, Sacrificulus sibi soli frangit rotulum Azimae hostiae, & privatim devorat, dicens, Corban, hoc est, votum avari proderit." These Passages would have been sufficient to move the Roman Catholics to put him to Death, tho he had not denied the Trinity. Servetus appears very devout through the whole Book, and concludes his Discourse concerning the LX. Signs of the Reign of Antichrist with these Words: "Quisquis vere credit Papam esse Antichristum, vere quoque credit Papisticam Trinitatem, Pseudobaptismum, & alia Papatus Sacramenta esse doctrinas Daemoniorum. O Christe Jesu Fili Dei, liberator elementissime, qui totius populum ab angustiis liberaisti, libera nos miseros ab hac Babylonica Antichristi Captivitate, ab Hypocrisi ejus, Tyrannide & Idololatria. Amen." Servetus believed that the Reign of Antichrist began in the Fourth Century, if not sooner. That Physician is the first, who mentioned the Circulation of the Blood. The Passage of his *Christianismi Restitutio*, relating to that Matter, may be seen in a Book of Dr. Wotton concerning Ancient and Modern Learning.

Servetus was more cautious than he had been 12 Years before; for he did not put his Name to his last Book. However he was not unwilling to be thought the Author of it; for Michael is one of the Interlocutors of the Two Dialogues inserted in that Work, and Peter, the other Interlocutor, begins with these Words, *En adest, Servetus est, quem ego querebam.*

Tho the *Christianismi Restitutio* was printed very privately, Calvin was informed that Servetus was the Author of it, and had a Copy sent to him. Whereupon he desired a Man, named William Trie, to write a Letter to Lyons in March 1553. wherein Servetus was represented as a very pernicious Man. That Letter was attended with the Title Page, the Index, and the first Leaves of the Book. Servetus complained of it upon his Trial at Geneva, and said that Calvin had sent those Sheets to Lyons to have him arrested and prosecuted as a Heretick. About a Fortnight after, Calvin sent by the same Man above Twenty Latin Letters, which he had received from Servetus, that he might be the better convicted of his Heresy. Those Letters were mentioned in the Sentence pronounced against him at Vienne.

Calvin succeeded in his Design: Servetus was (a) apprehended at Vienne by Virtue of William Trie's Letters. The following Circumstances are very Remarkable. The Vice-Bailiff carried him to Prison, as if it had been to visit a sick Person, and ordered the Jailor to use him well. His own Servant was allowed to lie in his Chamber, and every body had the Liberty to see him. Servetus was not long under Confinement: Two Days after, upon a Friday about Nine of the Clock in the Morning, having ask'd the Jailor the Key of the House of Office, he made his Escape through it.

(a) In the beginning of June.



The Magistrates being informed that he had ran away, met on the 17th of June, and condemned him to be burnt alive with a slow Fire, if he could be apprehended, and in the mean time to be burnt in Effigie with his Books. Accordingly on the same Day, his Effigies being laid upon a Cart, was carried to the Place of Execution, fastened to a Gibbet, and burnt with five Bales of his Books. Here follows the Sentence pronounced against him. I shall make no Alteration in the Orthography.

" ENTRE le Procureur du Roy Daulphin demandeur en crime d' heresie scandaleuse, dogmatifation, composition de nouvelles doctrines & livres heretiques, schisme & perturbation de l' union & repos publics, rebellion & desobeissance aux ordonnances faictes contre les heresies, effraction & evasion de prisons royales Delphinales, d' une part; & Mre Michel de Villeneuve medecin, parcy devant prisonnier aux prisons du Pallaix Delphinal de Vienne, & a present fugitif a cause desdits crimes, d'autre.

" Veu par nous les pieces justificatives desdites heresies, mesmes les Epistres & Escritures de la main dudit Villeneuve adressees a M<sup>e</sup> Jehan Calvin prescheur de Geneve, & par ledit de Villeneuve recogneues, ses reponces, confessions & negations, les reponces & autres, procedures concernant *Balthazard Arnollet* Imprimeur, certaines basles & livres imprimez, desquels l' intitulation est *Christianismi Restitutio*, les temoings examinez sur ce que ledit de Villeneuve avoit compose & faict imprimer ledit livre a ses despens, les rapports des Docteurs en Theologie & autres personnes notables sur les erreurs contenues audit livre & Epistres. Et lesquels erreurs & heresies sont d' ailleurs manifestes par la lecture d' yceux faictes sur l' evasion des prisons & diligences de apprehender ledit Villeneuve, adjournemens a troys briefs jours & defaults sur iceux obtenus, recollemens des temoings, conclusions definitives dudit Procureur du Roy Daulphin, & tout ce qui a esté remys par devers nous; le tout consideré, nous avons dict & disons les dictes defaults avoir esté bien & deurement obtenus, pour le profit desquels nous avons forclos & forcluons ledit de Villeneuve de toutes exceptions & defenses, declaire & declairons atteint & convaincu des cas & crimes a luy imposez, pour reparation desquels nous l' avons condamné & condamnons a l' avoir pour le regard de l' amende pecuniaire en la somme de mille livres tournois d' amende envers le Roy Daulphin, cela estre incontinent qu'il sera apprehendé, conduyt sur un tumbereau avec ses livres a jour & heure de marché des la porte du Pallaix Delphinal par les carrefours & lieux accoutumez jusques au lieu de la Hale de la presente Cité, & subsequment en la place appellée de Charneve, & illec estre brulé tout vif a petit feu, tellement que son corps soit mis en cendre. Cependant sera la presente Sentence executée en Effigie, avecques laquelle seront lesdits livres brulés. Et si l' avons condamné & condamnons es despens & frais de Justice, desquels nous reservons la taxe, declairans tous & chacun ses biens acqys & confisqués au profit de qui appartiendra, lesdits frais de Justice & amende sur iceux biens au préalable livrés & payés. De la Cour Vyballey & Juge Delphinal. *Grater Assesseur.*

### U L M.

A Latin Dissertation has been printed here concerning Coins and Medals. The Author discourses, among other Things, of those Gold-Pieces, call'd *Rainbow-Drops*, *Falling-Stars*, in German *Regenbogen-Schüßlein*, *Sternschuß*, that are to be found in this Country. They are hollow on the one side, and convex on the other. Some Types may be seen on both sides; but they are generally very much worn out on the convex Part. The People look

" *Carver Assesseur. Putod Assesseur. Du Prat Assesseur. Acheus Assesseur. Berand Assesseur. Phi. Noret Assesseur. Timpfieu Passard Assesseur. Bertier Assesseur. P. le Court Assesseur. Loys Marcel Assesseur. Cristoffe Assesseur. Publiee sadite Sentence en plein jugement a l' audience dudit Procureur du Roy Daulphin. Nous Vyballey & Juge susdit seans dans l' Auditoire du Pallaix Delphinal de Vienne le dix septieme jour du mois de Juing l' an mille cinq cens cinquante troys. Presens a ce M<sup>e</sup>s Philibert Collins, Alexandre Rolland, Claude Manguin, Charles Perdomey, Pierre des Vignes, & plusieurs autres Praticiens de Vienne illec estans, & moy Greffier soubsigné, Chasalis.*

" Dudit jour environ l'heure de mydy après que l' Effigie dudit Villeneuve avoir esté faicte au devant dudit Pallaix Delphinal, icelle Effigie par Francois Berode Executeur de la haute Justice, lequel l' on a envoyé querir a ces fins, a esté mise sur un tumbereau avec cinq basles des livres composez par icelluy Villeneuve, & après ledit tumbereau, chargé desdits Effigie & livres, a esté conduyt & mené par ledit Executeur des la porte dudit Pallaix par les carrefours & lieux accoutumez jusques au lieu de la Hale de la presente Cité de Vienne, & subsequment en la Place appellée la Charneve, dans laquelle ladite Effigie a esté attachée a une potence expressement érigée, & après brulée avec lesdits livres a petit feu par ledit Executeur, lequel a mis a deux & entiere execution ladite Sentence pour le regard de ladite Effigie, selon la forme & teneur, en presence de Guigues Ambrosin Crieur & Trompette de Vienne, Claude Reymet, Michel Basset Sergens Royaux Delphinaux, Sermet des Chams de Vienne, & de plusieurs autres gens illec assemblez pour voir faire ladite execution. Ainsi a esté procedé, & par moy Greffier soubnomme receu. Chasalis. Extrait des Registres de la Cour du Balliage de Vienne par moy Greffier soubsigné. Chasalis.

When this Sentence was pronounced against *Servetus*, it was a common thing to burn the Protestants in France. That very Year many of them were slain for the Word of God, and for the Testimony which they held.

*Tantum Religio potuit suadere malorum. \**

Cruelty is the peculiar Character of the Church of Rome. Those, who have felt the dismal Effects of a false Zeal for Religion, those who came out of great Tribulation, are in a more particular manner obliged to express their Abhorrence for Persecution upon all Occasions. I am,

S I R,

Your, &c.

\* An Historical Commentary upon those Latin Words, would be a very Curious Work, and an admirable Antidote against Persecution.

upon them as Productions of the Rainbow, that fall from the Clouds with the Rain. They ascribe to them imaginary Virtues; and some are so superstitious, as to hang them about their Necks as a Charm. The Author believes that those small Pieces are true Coins, struck by some Barbarous Nations of the North, such as the Franks, the Burgundi, the Goths, the Vandals, or the Normanni. Some will have most of those Pieces to have been struck in Sicily by the Vandals, because some of them have a Triangular Figure, and others Three Points marked upon them; which, in their Opinion, denotes the Three Promontories of that Island.